

Brentwood Planning Board

Minutes – March 6, 2014

Members Present: Bruce Stevens, Chairman Kevin Johnston
 Bob Magnusson Rob Wofchuck
 Jane Byrne, BOS rep Mark Kennedy, Alternate
 Glenn Greenwood, Circuit Rider Planner

7:00 open

Minutes – Mail – Board Business

Chairman Stevens opened the meeting at 7:00 pm.

Motion made by Wofchuck, 2nd by Magnusson to give Kennedy voting rights: all were in favor.

Motion made by Wofchuck, 2nd by Stevens to approve the February 20 minutes: the motion carried with Wofchuck and Byrne abstaining as they were not present.

New Hearing: Site Plan Review: Bouchard & Callahan – tax map 209.004

Paperwork is in order and abutters legally notified from the list provided by the applicant.

Motion made by Magnusson, 2nd by Johnston to accept jurisdiction: all were in favor.

Christopher Berry of Berry Surveying and Engineering spoke on behalf of the applicants this evening. Also present were applicants Doug and Erin Bouchard and Paul Callahan. There were no abutters present this evening.

Berry said they are proposing to convert the Kelliher property on Rte 125 into an 80 seat “farm to table” restaurant, and also use a portion for their home. There are approximately 5 acres on the site with a 1742 circa house. They will upgrade the septic and well, have had the wetlands marked by WSS & CSS Marc Jacobs. He said there is an easement across the parcel to the abutting conservation land, and they are working with the estate to verify the location of the easement.

He said this is not a typical restaurant, as much of the agricultural food items on site will be grown on site, including animals. He said they will have chickens, pigs and perhaps lamb, on site but not beef.

Berry said they will be requesting a waiver to the requirement for the 24 foot wide driveway entrance, down to 18 feet, and will work with the fire consultant on this matter. The intent is to keep as many of the existing trees along the edge as possible. He said this is a low volume, low speed use, and the design will allow for the safe travel of vehicles to and from the state highway. The neck of the drive will be 24 feet, as required by the NHDOT, who will issue a driveway permit. A Conditional Use Permit will be required for the entrance as it will be in the wetland buffer. There will be 42 parking spaces of which 2 will be ADA. A rain garden is proposed at the front of the parking area. They also provided a lighting plan. There will be a few out structures, barns and greenhouses, and they will show them on revised plans. They will have a gravel parking area, showing the parking spaces to be 20 foot by 9 foot each. Berry said they are proposing an 8 foot stockade fence along the edge of the parking, to prevent any lighting from spilling onto the conservation land. The lighting will be night sky compliant.

The small barn will be converted to a two bedroom home. Utilities will be underground; propane tank will be buried and Berry showed the septic area. There will be a new well for public water supply and Berry explained the drainage sheet. An area will be cleared for the gardens and greenhouses. While they are proposing 10 employees, they will be in shifts and not on site all the same time. He will meet with SFC Engineering to discuss the fire suppression requirements.

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Callahan spoke at this time, explaining his professional chef experience, and their desire for a farm to table concept, the farm will dictate the menu by the available produce, and they would also like to be able to have “culinary camps” for the kids, learning how to farm, etc, and learn how to prepare the food; are planning on a CSA program and “farm share”. He said there is an existing root cellar they will use, and will have a 4 season greenhouse.

Stevens suggested a site walk to see the entranceway after the applicant has had the opportunity to meet/talk with SFC Engineering. Stevens suggested that Berry review the comment letters from Greenwood, SFC Engineering and Town Engineer Steve Cummings, and bring back any responses to the next meeting.

Stevens asked Berry to contact the PB office when they felt they could get a site walk in.

Motion made by Magnusson, 2nd by Byrne to continue this hearing to April 3rd at 7:00 pm: all were in favor.

Laurie and Emma Loosigian and Mike Laham of Apple Annie (tax map 220.026) were in to speak to the Board, to inquire about possible expanded uses of their property. Greenwood said he has met with the Loosigians on several occasions over the past year, saying they have an interesting situation. He said they have agricultural endeavors that challenge him as a planner, with regards to land use conflict and how what goes on, on a farm, can impact the neighborhood and community. He said the Loosigian’s ideas include new things going on at the site, and said both he and the property owner need to be comfortable with what is going on. Greenwood asked them to meet with the Board so everyone understands some of the ideas and put it into context on that property.

Emma Loosigian said they are here to get a better understanding of what the goals of the town are, with regards to agriculture. With the loss of their crop in 2012, they are trying to diversify the use of the farm, perhaps by raising different crops, etc. She said New Hampshire has a rich history with agri-tourism, and they want to run some ideas by the Board. These ideas include educational programs, camps during the summer, hosting workshops, night walks to learn about the forest, working in the gardens, etc. They would also like to consider farm stays. They have two yurts on the property, and would like to host families or small groups of people for one or two night stays where they would be immersed in the work of the farm and gardens, etc., eating, using the facilities in the house. She spoke with Lorraine Merrill (NH Agriculture Commissioner) who was very supportive of this idea. Merrill told her that in the 1800’s, NH instated Old Home Days, to bring people who had left NH and “made their fortune” back to either buy run down farms or would stay on a farm for vacation as “paying guests” and also work on the farm.

Loosigian said another idea they have is “farm weddings” on the property. She said they would “get a bulk amount of people onto the farm for one afternoon, to do this wedding thing; they’re also exposed to our farm store and all these products, and they walk away with all of our peaches and leave us their money”. She said it is part of their picture of marketing these products, and they have an idea of 2 to 6 weddings during July and August, with a maximum number of people of perhaps 120 people. They would like to build a connection between the wedding, tying it to agriculture somehow. She said people who want to marry on a farm do so because it is a farm, the culture that is in their values, and to connect with nature. They also want to be able to offer farm tours, have people participate working on the farm. She said their main ideas are mutual programs for farm stays and farm weddings.

Greenwood said the educational programs are now a mainstay with farms all over the country, but he said the problem for him is the weddings, that becomes a function and use of the property, that, as a planner, he has difficulty, it being anything but something commercial. He said agri-tourism is part of the state definition of agriculture.

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Stevens said he understands farm mazes, but for weddings this would be opening up the commercial door. He said any rights run with the land, not the applicant. He said once they open the door to a commercial venture not aligned to agriculture; that is something that would exceed the Planning Board's authority to grant. Loosigian, would like to figure out how a farm wedding could be agricultural. She said Merrill said this is being done all over the state. Greenwood said the state is trying to better define agri-tourism, and he said this underlines the fact that there is tension with small communities, trying to deal with and understand the different ways farms can be used. He said the last proposed legislation he saw talked about making it clear that towns have the right to determine the extent of different land uses and land use impact on farms.

Loosigian said they had three small weddings last summer, one under the apple trees, one along the sunflowers, and one next to a peach tree, and that feels agricultural to her because they were there because it was a farm with farm products. The numbers attending ranged from 50 people to about 120 people. Kennedy said he did not think any of the attendees learned anything about working on a farm. St. Hilaire said this is clearly a commercial activity, they will be charging for this, there are sanitary and parking issues, for example. She said the location and activity is not suitable, there is no parking. This is on a scenic road that is not paved. There are only two acres for this activity, as the remainder is in conversation easement. Greenwood said the goal of the Planning Board is to understand and minimize land use conflict. The PB needs to make sure people can use and enjoy their own land without being bothered by how their neighbors are using their land. Greenwood would like the PB to spend time thinking about that other opportunities a farmer has with their farm.

Abutter Ward Byrne was present and said that during the weddings last year there were cars parked all along Rowell Road, that there were beer cans in his field afterward. He said that this does not fit in with the neighborhood, that area cannot support that type of environment, and he is opposed to this use. Wofchuck said there are people who have private parties in their back yards, and perhaps working with Loosigians for maybe one weekend a year. Kennedy said that is opening the door that cannot be shut.

Greenwood asked the PB if he could invite Merrill to come and speak with the Board. Laurie Loosigian said they want to work with the community and the neighbors. Stevens said the PB can't sanction weddings; this would need to follow septic, parking, etc regulations. Greenwood will contact Merrill to come to a meeting in the future. The Loosigians' thanked the Board for their time this evening.

Board Business

A draft of proposed amendments to the subdivision regulation pertaining to fire suppression, were given out for the Board to review for discussion on March 20th. A copy of Fire Inspector Jon Trues' February 10 letter to the Board was distributed.

Wofchuck reminded members of the Green Infrastructure presentation will take place at our March 20th meeting. He will have them come in for 7:30.

Motion made by Byrne, 2nd by Magnusson to adjourn at 9:20: all were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy St. Hilaire
Administrative Assistant,
Brentwood Planning Board